Twelve Reasons To Reject The Salvation Army

The following information is intended to help you kick the Salvation Army habit. It will do so by demonstrating that the Sally Ann are a ruthless conservative cult who engage in rampant homophobia, racism and discrimination. We ask that you ponder our arguments carefully so that you may reconsider your attitude next time the Salvos come calling. We have included footnotes should you wish to research the matter further.

1. Recognise its historical role in upholding inequality.

From it's earliest formation, during the "Darkest England" period of late Victorian society, the Salvation Army has constructed itself as a force for conservative Christian values, albeit with a few crumbs thrown in for the poor. Salvation Army founder William Booth spent years evangelising before he came to the realisation that he would never achieve his goal of banishing the three A's "Alcohol, Atheism and Anarchy" from England's underclass if he did first keep them from starving. The Salvation Army's social work efforts can thus be directly linked to Booth's failure to convert the poor through more conventional means [1].

A former pawnbroker, Booth was aware that poverty largely stemmed from the structure of society he was in. However the social system that created conditions of poverty and inequality was not to be improved or replaced via social revolution. Instead Booth hoped to promote a "kinder, gentler" form of industrial capitalism, one imbued with the conservative "Christian values" of hard work, abstinence and charity. Booth characterised the revolutionary Christianity of the Diggers and Levellers as "utopian" and believed that Salvation Army members could earn a large profit from their businesses and yet still keep a good conscience. In his view (and contrary to many others) the Bible was detached from social and economic change. For him the work of a good Christian was to piously tend to the poor rather than to work with them in the hope of transforming a society dependent on poverty for profit.

Regardless of their attitude toward social structures the primary aim of the Salvation Army was not to provide charity, but to win souls from the devil. Booth stated that what was important was not "whether a man died in a poorhouse.but if his soul was saved."[2]. Dispensing the absolute basics of food and temporary housing to the needy was motivated by the need to recruit rather than by any of the Bible's dictums. Any of the poor who were unfortunate enough to impinge on the Army's Christian morals were quick to discover themselves out in the street, hungry or not [3].

Thus from its very beginnings the Salvation Army was in favor of a world made up of

bosses and the bossed around. Its own organisational set up reflected this love of authority utilising a military structure replete with uniforms and an army band. Control of the Army passed from Booth to his first son and so remained until ranking officers pulled a coup [4]. The organisation's basic autocracy however remained untouched with little power at the grassroots and almost total control at the top [5].

The moral code that was enforced and encouraged by the Army was extreme, even by Victorian standards. There was no drinking, swearing, smoking, premarital sex or gambling allowed. The only permissible pleasure was praying and playing in the Army band. The justification given for this moral order was that the Bible had described such behaviour as sinful. This interpretation of the bible's teachings is however highly debatable as the Salvation Army has itself at times been forced to admit [6]. The basis for these moral values is more likely to be found amongst Booth's personal hang ups than in the professed teachings of Christ.

This moral code unfortunately had a dark side in that it allowed the Salvation Army to blame the victims of poverty for their situation and to argue that the symptoms of poverty (alcohol abuse, prostitution, etc) were actually its cause. Such a ruse let their rich backers off the hook. It also meant that any of the poor who broke their moral code were denied access to food and housing, a fact attested to by George Orwel and a policy which reputedly continues today [7].

As Britain's social problems increased it was recommended that the poor be sent out to colonise other lands. This colonisation was to be regardless of the feelings of the people who already lived in those places. As a solution to poverty it ignored the fact that Britain had more than enough resources to clothe, feed and house all of it's population, but it did help the real aim of colonisation- the building of bigger empires. Booth was one the first to draw up detailed plans for how agricultural colonies could be designed to soak up Britain's mass of unemployed and its arguable that these ideas had some affect on Imperial planners [8]. Arch capitalists and politicians such as Cecil Rhodes, Theodore Roosevelt, etc lent moral and financial support to such schemes [9].

As the Empire expanded so did the Salvation Army. Along with all the other Christian sects they were quick to claim a slice of each country's indigenous people as their spiritual property. Backed with the wealth and might of the British Empire the Salvation Army formed a strong part of the Christian vanguard. Along with the others they worked to tear indigenous people's communities and spirituality apart whilst attempting to teach them the values of hard work and capitalism [10]. Here in Australia the Salvation Army ran missions to "Christianise" aborigines and helped steal

indigenous children from their parents' homes so that they could be placed in the homes of god fearing white Christian do gooders.

Colonisation failed to destroy the seeds of rebellion, but the Salvation Army, wherever it went maintained its support for the status quo. As Booth famously stated a "philanthropic body cannot afford to alienate the class which supports it" [11]. This is a notion very much alive in the Army today [12]. Most famously the Salvation Army clashed with the Industrial Workers of the World in a series of countries. The IWW was, and still is, an organisation committed to radically restructuring society in order to equally divide the spoils of wealth amongst those who create it. The means of achieving this include the creation of One Big Union to unite all workers as well as the use of strikes, sabotage and other means of direct action.

During the early part of this century the IWW agitated primarily, but not wholly, amongst the unskilled and transient sectors of society. These were the people who other Unions would not support and who were also society's poorest. These people were also the main target of the Salvoes. The two groups not only competed for the minds and support of the working classes, but also for public stages and spaces from which to speak. The IWW campaigned both in Australia and the US for the public speaking rights the Salvoes enjoyed, but were denied them. Many battles ensued, and despite their claims to Christian morals, the Salvation Army were not above joining with thugs in physically attacking IWW speakers [13].

As one of the most vociferous critics of the Salvation Army the IWW often employed humor in belittling their pious attitudes. IWW members invented the term "Starvation Army". Famous folk singer and labour martyr Joe Hill penned numerous songs and parodies of hymns ridiculing them for their "pie in the sky when you die" attitudes. Whilst the IWW at times enjoyed huge support it was unable to withstand concerted attacks from the Salvation Army's primary donors- the ruling corporations and governments. After many years of deportations, broken strikes, assassinations and jailing it was pushed out of its frontline role in social struggles. In aiding attacks upon the IWW and other grassroots organisations the Salvation Army eliminated all competition. It also helped carve out a position for itself as one of the only organisations sanctioned by the state to "help" the homeless and unemployed.

He Salvation Army also had to contend with other problems in the colonies. Booth was in such a hurry to create a worldwide Christian army that he often sent out missionaries hopelessly unsuited to the task [14]. Organisational blunders consequently hampered the Salvation Army's attempts to gain a foothold across the Empire. Coupled with this was the familiar problem of attacks on members. By

encouraging Salvationists to force themselves upon drinkers and gamblers Booth put his soldiers directly in the firing line. In Australia it was not uncommon for Salvationists to march into pubs and drown out all conversation with the singing of hymns. Neither was it uncommon for them to be run out of the same establishments whilst being pelted with flour bombs and rotten fruit and vegetables [15].

Despite these handicaps the Salvation Army has been able to consolidate itself as a worldwide religious organisation. In its 120 years it has had no greater success than in Australian where it has become the biggest national charity with a paper claiming the nation's largest Christian readership [16]. Through business enterprises and the patronage of government and business it has gained control of a vast number of services, companies, buildings, training academies, publishing houses and other resources. Internationally the Salvation Army remains strongest in the West, but has included chapters in just about every country in the world.

2. Reject its homophobia.

The Salvation Army is often at pains to distance itself from right wing Christian fundamentalism and yet its views are not dissimilar. Many of the "pro family" Christian coalitions it takes part in are dominated by fundamentalists who wish to condemn gays and lesbians to a hell here on earth. [17]. The Salvation Army also unequivocally condemns homosexual activity. They put a nice face on this persecution though. Unlike their fundamentalist brethren they merely believe that God pities homosexuality on earth and will save the hellfire for later.

The Salvation Army is on record as having campaigned against the legalisation of homosexuality in various countries [18]. They have also lobbied against translations of the Bible that interpret God's view on homosexuality positively [19]. Homosexuality is seen as a perversion and a corruption, but whilst Salvoes may find gay and lesbians distasteful they are instructed to address them politely and attempt to convert them [20]. They believe that the "social disease" from which the homosexual suffers is curable via God's "love",. However where it is fully entrenched it is still possible for people to refrain from "sinful" activity and therefore avoid going to hell [21].

The Salvation Army through the War Cry and the distribution of homophobic books repeatedly spread the myths that gays and lesbians are more promiscuous, diseased and morally corrupt than their heterosexual counterparts [22]. One of their prime arguments against homosexual behaviour is the fallacious, but popular idea that it

spreads AIDS and other STD's in and of itself. Rather than arguing for safe sex they see the final solution the disappearance of same sex relations altogether [23]. Whilst pushing an "understanding" line the Salvation Army has no qualms in promoting such scare mongering claims as "the homosexual lifestyle is simply an invitation to an early grave" [24].

In opposing homosexuality and counseling people to repress rather than accept their sexuality the Salvation Army can be seen as creating a patronising, "caring" form of homophobia in our society. Whilst they are not out bashing gays and lesbians themselves the Salvoes help create the mentality that furthers oppression. By preaching such homophobia they contribute immeasurably to the ill treatment and unhappiness of those gays and lesbians who remain closeted within their own ranks.

3. Recognise that it is a religious cult.

Given the weird uniforms, puritanical doctrines, rigid hierarchy, guru worship and band playing the Salvation Army could almost be seen as the Hare Krishnas of Christendom. Unlike the Moonies, the Jehovah's Witnesses and Branch Davidians the Salvation Army however remain a widely accepted part of society due to their charity work. This is despite the fact that they indulge in record burning, millenarianism, demonic references and other kooky practices [25].

Upon joining the Salvation Army, members pledge "unquestioning obedience and sacrifice" to their Church. Internal dissension is tightly controlled and dissenters reigned in [26]. Founding guru Booth described autocracy as "God's own system" [27]. Young people are expected only to marry within the Army. Officers are to only marry other officers and have to leave if they marry "civilians". Members must seek Army permission to go on dates or engage in other forms of courting. These practices alone indicate an unhealthy degree of control over followers lives [28].

Salvation Army material constantly refers to The Founder, William Booth in tones that are almost idolatry. The question frequently is not what Christ would have done, but what would the Founder have done. Such lavishness to one man (who existed in very different times) is reminiscent of guru worship. A clear example of this is in the Salvation Army's rejection of smoking since as they admit, the Bible doesn't refer to smoking in any shape or form [29]. Yet because Booth said it was immoral it becomes "unchristian behaviour".

Connected to this guru worship is the continuance of the rigid hierarchy and rule

system self admitted "dictator" Booth put in place [30]. With few modifications the Salvation Army remains a strict autocracy under a largely male power structure with a General at the top wielding almost total power [31]. The Army admits censoring divergent views within its ranks and all are bound to the "11 doctrines" [32]. This kind of anti democratic activity seems to be largely outside what most would see as modern Christian activity.

The Salvation Army's insularity and arrogance continually leads it into conflicts with local communities and community sector workers. Its main drug and rehabilitation unit was recently shut down in Victoria due to a lack of medical facilities [33] and it has come under much criticism for using untrained volunteers in its domestic violence services [34]. Time and time again the Salvation Army has been confronted by critics who point to it's dangerous practice of employing untrained Salvationists to deal with potentially fatal situations such as domestic violence and drug addiction. In response to such criticisms the Salvation Army has attempted to rest on its dubious laurels or moaned about a lack of funding. This is quite strange when you consider the property and resources they have boasted of owning at other times [35].

A specific example of the way in which the Salvation Army's arrogance puts lives in danger can be found in NSW. During the past few years the police have taken to referring victims of domestic violence to the Salvation Army's Careline. This is despite Careline lacking properly trained staff and the resources of other services. Careline has been accused of improperly advising people over their options in some cases allegedly advising women to stay with abusive and violent partners "for the sake of the children" [36].

The Salvation Army's insularity reinforces their notion that their mixed up morals are suitable for all others and that their workers are the best regardless of their qualifications. This arrogance is openly stated in Salvationist publications, which claim they do a better job than "humanist" agencies. Evidence to back the claim that untrained or trained Christians make better welfare workers than secular or Islamic or Buddhist ones is naturally lacking [37].

Another area in which The Salvation Army's "god given" right to act as they see fit has caused conflict is in the placement of their homeless hostels and emergency services. Whilst some public reaction to Army projects has been based on ignorance and prejudice against homeless people the Army has shown no ability to educate and inform local people of their intentions when developing new buildings. Instead, in league with local councils, they have acted like any other properly developer and

rode roughshod over community concerns. Two recent examples of this have been seen in the construction of a hostel in North Melbourne (replacing a de funded public school) and one in Sydney [38].

In considering the cult like status of the Salvation Army we must also go back to the original goal of the organisation. Whilst the leadership of the Army admits there has been some slackening of religious focus the Salvation Army's primary mission continues to be the saving of souls. According to it's Yearbook it is engaged in "spiritual warfare" [39] it's social work remains "indirect evangelical work" [40]. As one Salvationist put it "All the time, at any task I am doing the work of an Evangelist. The aim is to communicate Jesus" [41]. Officers are trained in evangelical work firstly and then assigned to either the social or evangelical wing - two wings that compete or crossover within the organisation. Because of this it is impossible to see how the Salvation Army can claim not to be using it's social work as a method of recruiting people to its own brand of Christianity.

Similarly whilst the Army claims it does not use funds raised for charity in evangelical work it must be noted that all officers (as opposed to unpaid soldiers) draw a wage from Salvation Army coffers and that these officers are instructed to spend at least some of their time evangelising. In this way their religious activities are quietly funded [42]. Testimonials from ex drug users and others who came to its ranks via its rehabilitation programs also indicate that religion is regularly referred to in these programs. The use of 12 step programs (which constantly refer to faith in a higher power) also indicate a religious agenda largely hidden from the public [43]. The Army's refusal to take part in Government programs which exempt religion provides further proof that saving souls via conversion is the real work of the organisation and not charity [44].

4. Repudiate its support for conservative policies.

Despite the Salvation Army's claims to be apolitical a close look at its connections, activities and history show that it is anything but. From the very beginning the Salvation Army has seen itself as a bulwark against socialism. Booth censured those sections of the early Army who attempted to attack the rich for their role in creating poverty [45]. When addressing wealthy donors Catherine Booth (wife of William) promoted the Army as "the only organisation whose members to any appreciable extent buttonhole the dangerous classes on their own ground and turn them away from anarchy, infidelity and socialism" [46].

The Salvation Army's support for right wing causes goes far beyond attempting to control radical attitudes amongst the underclass. The Salvation Army in Australia and internationally aligns itself and forms coalitions with a variety of Fundamentalist Christian groups and has participated in evangelical tours of Fundamentalists such as Billy Graham. They have also worked with Right to Lifers to oppose euthanasia and restrict (though not ban) abortion rights and have encouraged their children and other youth to join a US Fundamentalist "True Love Waits" celibacy program. Whether they support other initiatives such as banning the teaching of evolution in schools is less clear.

The Army is also an active part of the Canberra based conservative Australian Christian Coalition lobby [47]. The Salvation Army opposed the Beijing Women's Conference on the grounds that it was controlled by lesbians and feminists [48]. They are also members of the Religious Alliance Against Pornography, an international group seeking to ban pornography and institute governmental censorship of music and literature. Where the efforts of this lobby have been successful, in places such as Canada, censorship has seen state authorities persecute political and sexual minorities whilst leaving the moneyed mainstream porn industry untouched [49].

The Salvation Army's patently false policy of not interfering with politics has also allowed them to work and receive financial support from a number of right wing regimes around the world including Apartheid era South Africa and Rhodesia. In Indonesia Salvationists have also reportedly worked with and run parts of Indonesia under the Suharto regime. Whilst criticism of these countries human rights records was not forthcoming it is interesting to note that the Salvationists policy of silence did not extend to communist countries during the cold war period.

5. Indent its role in state repression.

Whilst the church and state are theoretically divided the Salvation Army works tirelessly within the government to push its conservative agenda. In the late eighties in the name of "the right to work" the Salvos collaborated with the Federal Labor government in changing unemployment benefits from a "living wage for all" to a system whereby unemployed people are paid to look for non existent jobs. Currently the Salvation Army works as case managers (read dole police) for Centrelink through their own private Job Network agency [50]. It also colludes with the Federal Government in receiving free "unemployed labour" under the pretext of Work For The Dole. By contending that they are teaching the unemployed a useful skill the Salvation Army are able to fill their various services

with welfare conscripts whilst the government foots the bill.

The penetration and control of areas of the welfare state sets a fearful precedent in that religious organisations are put in a position of power over the poor. This is only set to get worse as religious organisations with now becoming a direct arm of the welfare system. Those unemployed unfortunate enough to land themselves in Salvation Army "training schemes" are already finding themselves beholden to a strict internal moral and political order. It is hardly a surprise to find that entrepreneur Dick Smith and right wing talk back host John Laws (constant critics and enemies of welfare recipients) are two of the Army's biggest supporters.

The Salvation Army has also become part of the state through the provision of food, entertainment and moral support to Australian troops in almost every conflict that they have been involved in [51]. Despite the bible instructing "Thou Shalt Not kill" it is obviously okay to help others do so. Interestingly the Salvation Army's official histories leave out mention of its role in troop support during the unpopular Vietnam conflict. In the meantime though they have continued to prepare for future combat by providing canteens at Kangaroo '95 and other military exercises despite these events giving training to the genocidal Indonesian military and other human rights abusers [52].

6. Stupid outfits and poor musicianship.....?

Need we say more?

7. Identify it as a racist organisation.

As noted earlier the Salvation Army was an integral part of Christendom's exploitation of indigenous people. Up until the late 1960s the Salvation Army ran a number of missions for Aboriginal people in which their movements, beliefs and lifestyle were closely monitored. Aboriginals were confined to these missions and their children forced to follow a strict pattern of work and Christian education. The Salvation Army were active participants in the removal of children from their families and aided in attempts to integrate them into white society. Aboriginal resistance was strong, but nonetheless colonisation left much destruction in its wake.

Whilst the Salvation Army's collusion with these racist policies is totally ignored in their official histories, indeed no mention of Aboriginal people is made at all, we can still see the traces of their policies at work today. In a number of articles in the War Cry covering the Federal government's "reconciliation" whitewash the "mistakes" of

the past are quickly glossed over. The Salvation Army continuously point to their few Aboriginal members, but make no mention of those who choose an indigenous spirituality [53]. For the Army it is simply a matter of "getting along" with no attempt made to address the Aboriginal majority's demands for land rights and a treaty. By continuing to recruit within Aboriginal communities and by refusing to address their past crimes the Army persist with their racist legacy.

There are plenty of examples of the Salvation Army historically working with racist authorities in countries other than Australia even to the extent of attempting to take control of the "Indian Affairs" department in the US. Little appears to have changed in the organization's meddling colonial approach as it has recently, along with other Christian groups, opposed the recognition of "witchcraft" (read shamanism) as a valid religious belief within the new South African constitution. It also continues to aid and support US Fundamentalist Christians in their attempts to convert displaced rainforest dwellers in South America [54].

Most alarmingly Salvation Army members continue to administer sections of Indonesia, and in some cases, have even gone to the extent of ordering villagers to change their traditional dances due to their sexual nature. They are also active in bringing bibles into "godless" China and North Korea. In Papua New Guinea they continue to run religious based missions on an "educational basis. " Although they no longer stipulate that people must first embrace god to receive these services it is hard to imagine them leaving their religious principles out altogether [55].

8. Rebuff its corrupt and dodgy business practices.

The Salvation Army has always run it's own profit making businesses. Indeed it's commercial ventures and connections play a key role in maintaining the sect. Initially all property and businesses had to be under William Booth's total control, but over the last 100 years things have become far more diversified.

The Army's entrepreneurial pursuits have always been run on a cutthroat basis. In the 1880's they were accused of undercutting other firms wages and of competing with poor laundry women for customers [56]. Today they continue to undercut independent craftspeople through its workshops which often exploit disabled labour and community service prisoners.

In Australia the Salvation Army runs a huge charity shop empire staffed by volunteers selling donated goods at inflated prices to the disadvantaged. Whilst the

Army could redistribute freely the goods that come to it at no cost they believe that it is important to maintain a money based economy. To avoid oversupplying the market the Army even goes to the extent of dumping tons of goods and clothing in suburban tips [57].

The way the Salvation Army administers its food and housing is also problematic. The bulk of the food that the Salvation Army uses for its soup kitchens is free. This food is usually made up from packaged and processed tins of food that are approaching their use by date. Such food is inadequate for basic human health, but is dished out to the homeless with the knowledge that they are in no position to complain. One would expect better from an organisation that boasts millions in assets and property in Victoria alone. In comparison, the Food Not Bombs soup kitchen in Melbourne provides free, healthy, and predominantly organic food to Melbourne's needy. They receive no government funding and make do with borrowed and donated equipment. Work that one out!

When people have attempted to live in disused Army property they have been met with break ins, the seizure of property and other attacks. In one case the Army resorted to the use of police and the eventual demolished a building rather than have people live in it who were not under their control [58]. Given that the Army owns a huge amount of property throughout Australia it is not unlikely that numerous such evictions have occurred.

The Army's fixation with turning a profit nurtures and draws the corrupt amongst their ranks. This corruption most significantly came to light during 1990 when a series of major scams were unearthed in NSW and Victorian Army branches.). A police taskforce was originally set up after a fire destroyed a Salvation Army warehouse in Williamstown. Following the blaze an insurance valuation discovered that 1000s of items had disappeared before the fire and could not be accounted for. In the cases that followed a number of Salvation Army members were charged with arson and theft having skimmed off cash from the sale of donated clothing. Most of the cash had been drawn from morally suspect sales of donated clothing to Third World countries [59]. Eventually, the Salvation Army was forced to admit that it had no internal accounting system for the clothes people had donated and that such scams could have been going on for years [60]. With Salvation Army industries constantly expanding and nothing but a moral break to prevent management ripping off money, continued corruption is inevitable.

9. Recognise its reliance on corporate and government support.

Public donations to the Salvation Army in Australia have been decreasing since the 1950s. The introduction of the Red Shield Appeal in 1967 alleviated matters somewhat, but in the past few years the Army has once again reported a major drop in donations- something it has ridiculously attributed to the introduction of legalised gambling.

In the face of decreasing funds the organisation has once again turned to strengthening its ties with the government. Since the 1880's the Army has enjoyed financial support from state governments (and federally after 1901). Whilst the community sector has seen major cuts from recent conservative governments, the Army has increased its cut of the community sector pie by tendering out for services such as case management and care for the homeless. It has also increased its income by empire building at other charities' expense with its most recent coup seeing itself secure its position as Sydney's only supplier of food packages to the needy.

By supporting conservative religious charities state and federal governments aim to reduce their responsibility, spending and accountability whilst at the same time attempting to prevent economic circumstances from becoming too extreme. In this way groups such as Salvation Army contribute to attacks on welfare rights. It is not inconceivable that in the long term the Salvation Army will return to its traditional role as the only form of welfare available to the lower classes. Indeed it has be known to champion itself as a cheaper alternative to the welfare state [61].

The Salvation Army has also built on its corporate ties. Companies with dodgy track records on the treatment of workers and the environment, including BHP and McDonalds, have flocked to support the charity that has traditionally supported them. Chain stores such as K Mart have begun helping the Salvation Army in return for the enhancement of corporate image that such "good works" bring. The Salvation Army has been using McDonalds to help get people out on fundraising door knocks through the offer of free burgers. Such policies can only push the Army to pander ever more sycophantically to the rich. A clear example of the compromises forced upon them was the recall of 6000 copies of the War Cry in 1993 after one Salvationist criticised McDonalds food as unhealthy. Following the burger giant's continued displeasure a public apology was also issued [62].

10. Reject its attempts to control the choices of others.

The Salvation Army has always made temperance a central platform of its religious strategies. Although it no longer resorts to disrupting pubs and gathering places with its meetings the Army lobbies the government heavily in seeking to restrict personal freedoms and continue the destructive drug war. When faced with the fact that the bible makes no reference to modern drug use Salvationists resort to the argument that the body is the "temple of the soul" and that to abuse it is sinful [63]. Why this fails to lead them to also oppose pollution and boycott McDonalds is unclear.

The Army's attitudes would be merely amusing if not for the fact that they force them upon others. Most insidiously they base their rehabilitation schemes upon Twelve Step Programs. These programs see the embrace of a higher power as the eventual cure for the "disease" of addiction and the Salvation Army is on record as stating that only "God can cure alcoholism, not human agencies"[43]. As usual the Salvoes concentrate on individual fault (read sin) and fail to address the social causes of addiction.

In regards to drug reform the Army pushes a hard line rejecting the growing calls from counselors, courts and anti drug campaigners for decriminalisation measures. Salvationist literature harks back to the 1930s by equating marijuana with the use of hard drugs. It also falsely characterises drug-related crime as being related to the use of drugs alone rather than to the high prices and police corruption that prohibition has created.

During media related drug hysteria in Melbourne in 1997 the Salvation Army came out in full support for the continued ban on drugs and called for a tougher line on drug enforcement policies. Policies that even the police admit are not working and which penalise drug users over their suppliers [65]. The Salvation Army was jubilant in its success in defeating the proposed 1997 Canberra heroin trials and more recently noted its disappointment with Victorian police for introducing a caution system for drug offences. This is all despite them acknowledging that alcohol abuse is far more of a problem for society and that alcohol prohibition in the US (which they also supported) actually increased alcohol intake [66].

The Army's line on gambling is similarly confused and counterproductive. Whilst they admit that (yet again) the Bible has no record of this practice they still attempt to

condemn it on the grounds that it is unchristian, "incurs injuries on others" and lacks certainty. Interestingly this logic is not applied to the currency speculators and stockbrokers who gamble with our economic future every day. The recent loosening of laws relating to casinos and poker machines across Australia has seen the Army and other churches push for new bans on the basis of declining Church coffers. The Salvation Army has even gone so far as to condemn computer and arcade games [67]. Whilst the negative effects of gambling and drug use cannot be ignored it is clear that the Salvation Army is unable to address the wider social questions that their abuse pose.

11. Understand that it rips off and exploits its workers

Although the Salvation Army has on occasion provided food and shelter to striking workers during industrial disputes its treatment of it's own employees has by and large reflected a mean and patronising attitude. The Army has particularly abused the large pool of volunteer labour, which it uses to raise money and staff its community services.

The Salvation Army has particularly created a number of problems in its use of low-income tenants to supervise youth deemed "at risk". In these situations the Army sets up a quasi-foster parent arrangement in which tenants receive housing and some food in return for living with and taking care of a teenager. The tenants receive no cash income which is not only exploitative in itself, but which also helps the Army to avoid taking legal responsibility for the many problems that occur. In a number of cases tenants have found themselves in dangerous situations which they have not been trained to deal with. When injured they have had no recourse to compensation since technically they are not employees of the Salvation Army [68].

A recent case saw a young mother's child killed by the son of a senior Salvation Army officer who was in her care. She herself was sexually assaulted and nearly killed in the house where she cared for homeless teenagers. Because she was a tenant and not a formal employee the Army refused to pay her compensation or give her aid as Work Cover did not cover her. After going to the media and embarrassing them into helping her she stated "I want to feel conciliatory rather than bitter, but it's just a pity it took media exposure to produce this sort of a commitment from a supposedly charitable organisation". [69]

Another example of the Salvation Army's poor treatment of workers is it's use of

community service, Work For The Dole, trainee and disabled labour in its programs. In the case of disabled workers the Army employs them from it's own Sheltered Workshops to labour for only $8 a day. Workers are blackmailed into receiving low wages for fear of losing their government pensions [70]. Those who would claim that no one else would hire such workers should consider that the fact that rather than exploiting them, the Army could provide more enjoyable and educational programs for them to take part in.

In the case of people who are sentenced to community service the Salvation Army is consistently a winner as it uses them as a promotional device for its "good works" and as a cheap source of labour. Community service workers are not allowed to dine with other workers and in some cases must also pay rent and live at Salvation Army shelters whilst working off their court sentence [71]. People on rehabilitation schemes and some homeless trainees are also made to work for meager wages whilst paying exorbitant fees to live in Army accommodation. Women are banned from such accommodation, Army officers can enter individual's rooms at any time and a curfew of midnight is enforced.

The only way the Salvation Army gets away with such practices is through the use of Community Service and Charity laws, which allow "special work areas" immunity from union interference. Outside of it's workshops the Salvation Army is also quick to resist unionisation. The Australian Social Welfare Union has spoken out in the past about attempts by a variety of charity organisations, including the Salvation, to prevent workers from joining unions to gain protection from unfair dismissal. In NSW welfare workers do not even have a minimum wage guideline and charities have lobbied to prevent one being established [72].

The Salvation Army is particularly notorious for such anti-worker practices. In 1990 over 1500 of it's welfare workers struck in protest against their treatment and there have been ongoing problems since. In 1991 the Army also attempted to replace drivers Melbourne transport depot with contract labour. Workers with many years' experience were given a 15-minute notice of their sacking and a non-negotiated redundancy package. Quick thinking action ensured the Salvation Army had to back down on at least some of their decisions, but it had already proven itself yet again to be a cruel and exploitative employer.

12. Support social change over religious charity.

Having outlined various problems with the Salvation Army we can now clearly define it as an organisation committed to the curtailment of personal freedoms, the oppression of minorities and the maintenance of the political and economic status quo. In supporting religious charity over social change the Salvation Army has helped ensure a future for itself in picking over the wreckage of a profit based society.

There are alternatives to Salvation Army style charity and morality however. Whilst it is important to acknowledge that should you require their (or any other group's) resources to survive then you should use them it is equally important not to have any illusions about what they're doing for you and why they are doing it. Those of us in less desperate straits need to put our money, time and support into forms of self activity such as co-operatives, self help groups, co-counselling, squatting, permaculture, etc. These practices allow people to provide for themselves rather than remain dependent on charities and help us to begin to break the vicious circle of poverty and power. The number of grassroots schemes available are endless- the major problem facing them is promotion and funding.

Whilst we need to provide alternatives to charity we also have to fight for a decent share of the spoils of society. We need to establish at minimum the right for all to a living wage and to a decent level of social security. In the longer term we need to replace all forms of structural inequality and to create a more equitable society overall. With such changes in place both the need for charity and the power it has over us can be dispensed with.

-The Skeleton Army, Sydney, 1995. Updated 1997, 2001.

DOING TIME WITH THE SALVOS

There are many institutions eager to teach the working class to be docile, disciplined wage slaves - schools, welfare organisations, social security bureaucracies, not to mention most of our workplaces. For particularly stubborn cases, there is always the threat of the state's coercive power.

Over the last few years I've been to court a few times. The cases have ranged from minor traffic offences and the standard demo charges, through to theft. I've been given slap on the wrist fines through to jail - this was suspended on appeal. The most common sentence I've received has been Community Based Orders (CBO). CBO involves a work component and a range of optional extras, these include regular interviews and reporting, 'personal development', and weekly urine tests for drugs and alcohol. A court can order people to undertake these extras or the Office of Corrections (CORE) can add them to the order as they see fit.

The work component is ordered in the form of X hours over a period of Y months, which must be completed in the time frame. This work is arranged by CORE at 'approved not for profit organisations', which include soup kitchens, community projects, general crew work and Op Shops - the Salvation Army being the major work site. However, the Salvos Op Shops or Family Stores as they are now known, are profit driven organisations. They are no longer a service for the needy, but a business unit of the Salvos, whose profits are used to provide 'welfare services'. Unlike other businesses the Salvos rely heavily on coerced and volunteer labour. CBO workers are contracted to the Salvos for set days and times and must 'work as directed' and 'follow all reasonable instructions'.

The work performed by CBO labour can include rearranging areas of the store, sorting and pricing clothes, lugging furniture and assisting customers. There is no information or training on Occupational Health and Safety. Some stores are two storeys, yet no stair walking trolleys are available, electrical equipment is tested by plugging it in and flicking the switch. Workers have been threatened with breaches for pointing out OHS problems. A breach is a tool of intimidation and a warning system. After three it's up before the CORE office manager, one more and it's back to court. Other OHS problems involve the rubbish system, as the Salvos throw out some donated items. It is not enough to put something in a bin, it must be broken up so it is useless to anyone else. This involves climbing into a dump-master with a hammer and other tools to smash it up or jumping in wheelie bins to break the stuff up.

CBOers are unable to be sociable towards people we know who might come into the

shop. Visits are not allowed during work times. We are not allowed to make or take phone calls. Contracts state that workers are not allowed to leave the site but the Salvos are generous enough to let us go out and get lunch but it must be eaten on the premises.

The Salvos claim to provide a sociable-working environment. My idea of socialising isn't talking about the weather and last night's episode of Home and Away, I prefer to talk about real issues - like the MUA dispute. This was not appreciated and CBO workers were directed not to discuss such 'controversial' issues. This was considered by the supervisor to be a reasonable direction.

CORE makes me feel like they are just waiting for me and many others on a CBO to cross the line so we can be taken back to court. Restrictions are set up to catch us out. For example to leave the state I must get written permission after playing 20 questions and providing a good enough, verifiable reason. I will be breached for missing appointments, even ones that I have made. We are forbidden from drinking 12 hours before work, must notify them within 24 hours of moving house or changing jobs and can be subjected to random tests for drugs or alcohol. I had to provide them with my girlfriend's name, address, occupation and phone numbers.

This kind of treatment is not just reserved for 'criminals'. With Howard's work for the dole scam now in place, the same type of control is extended to young people on the dole. The Liberals see them as welfare criminals and treat them as such (I say 'them' because I'm on Austudy now). The Howard government has been increasing the number of CORE-style requirements for people receiving government payments. Work for the dole, Green Core, Case Management and the Dole Diary are all based on the CORE system. Each of these programs is designed to catch people out, making the regulations tighter and tighter and the punishments for breaching these more and more punitive. The Salvos are one of the largest work sites for CBO, Job Brokers, Case Management agencies. The Salvos are heavily into the theory you happily work 9 till 5 weekdays, spend Saturday with the wife and kids, then it's off to church on Sunday. If that keeps you happy, good for you, but don't ram it down my throat. The Salvo model may help some people and keep others quite content, but if it doesn't suit you the state can make you comply. With CORE through breaches and the threat of jail. With Centrelink through payment reductions and cancellations.

Tony.

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Postscript

In the years since this pamphlet was originally written the Salvation Army has greatly expanded its power base. This has largely been enabled by the Federal Government's privatisation of the Job Network. By decentralising the sections that oversee and police those reliant on social security the government has both divested itself of responsibility whilst also provided a massive financial grant to their friends in the conservative charities.

As the largest private operator in the Job Network the Salvation Army has failed to prove itself anymore capable of finding people jobs than the old government services were. With eight job seekers for every advertised position this is hardly surprising. What the Army has excelled at though is the harassment of the unemployed. With an openly discriminatory hiring policy the Army only employs Christians in their Job Network franchises thereby guaranteeing their own members a cushy career in cutting people off the dole or farming them out to useless Work For The Dole schemes. Who better to prosecute the governments unwritten "blame the victim" agenda than the people who have pushed that position all along?

The government's investment in conservative charities has paid off in more ways than one. Not only have they got the charities doing their dirty work, but they have also bought their silence. Not a peep was heard from the Salvation Army when Saint Vincent De Pauls, one of the few charities not on the government's Job Network payroll, complained that Centrelink were forcing too many people off the dole and onto their emergency services.

The Army's refusal to comment on the criticisms probably stems from the fact that they are in part responsible for the situation. During the furore sections of the mainstream media pointed out that many of the people forced to seek emergency help were doing so because their payments had been breached due to Job Network incompetence. Each year sees 10 000s of social security recipients successfully appeal against such breaches making it clear that whilst someone is making plenty of mistakes the only people paying for them are the unemployed.

Saint Vincent De Pauls also aired their opposition to being made a wing of the government's welfare apparatus. This has been happening on a stealthy, de facto basis due to Centrelink and the Job Networks' habit of referring people in need to charities rather than providing them with government assistance. Again it is unsurprising that

the Salvation Army failed to join in these criticisms as their long standing goal is to corner all sections of welfare market for themselves! For the sake of those unemployed and needy who are not tee totaling, anti gay, right wing Christians we hope that they fail to do so.

More recently the Army has kept quiet over the government's admission that people completing Work For The Dole schemes are no more likely to find paid work than those who have not. Tony Abbott, the Minister responsible, flatly admitted that the point of the schemes was "Not to find people work", but to teach them discipline. Discipline them for what though? To sit quietly and not complain about the lack of real work available or to teach them to cop any old job, no matter how casual or dangerous, so long as its not another Mickey Mouse government scheme?

As usual the Salvation Army has failed to comment on the failures of Work for the Dole. But why would they complain about the conscription of the unemployed when they are reaping a tidy profit running dozens of these schemes across the country and when their members are the only ones getting real jobs out of them?

The government's monetary injection has also seen the Army's backward ideas on religion and morality step further out of the shadows. Whilst in the past the organisation has tended to promote itself primarily as a charity its status as a cult is increasingly coming to the fore. Cash breeds confidence and as noted earlier the group's new found wealth has seen them flagrantly contravene anti-discrimination laws with a "Christians Only" policy in the hiring of Job Network staff. Obviously a person's religious views have no bearing on their ability to help people find work so the Salvoes hiring policy must be seen as purely based on their own peculiar prejudices. This has always been the case, but for them to come with it out openly and defiantly marks a new phase in their operations.

The Salvation Army has also become more open in its evangelical activities. Most notably they have invested their Job Network profits in a total makeover of their paper The War Cry. Gone are the stories advocating the psychological reprogramming of gays and lesbians and the burning of heavy metal records. Gone are the blurry photos of grannies in ill fitting uniforms playing tubas. Gone is the smudgy black ink. In their place comes a glossy full colour magazine with a guaranteed Christian pop star (U2, Enya, etc.), actor or wrestler (!) on every cover. The stories now found inside concern non-controversial topics and are slickly, though still crappily, written. Positive tales of the transforming power of Christ

abound whilst the Salvation Army's negative attitudes toward other people's social behavior are left out. Overall the Army has transformed its paper from an internal bulletin to an outward looking recruitment tool. One that can be actively and increasingly foisted on those with whom they come into contact through their charity shops and other ventures.

Lastly it is worth noting that the group's newfound confidence has also allowed them to indirectly increase their influence over the population at large. They have stepped up their lobbying efforts in relation to gambling, sexuality and drug use and with social conservatives (both Liberal and Labor) ruling the roost they have scored a number of victories. The past few years have seen such politicians scuttle moves to allow for drug decriminalisation, safe injecting rooms and euthanasia. At the same time they have increased the level of censorship and strengthened a variety of laws curtailing personal freedoms. For the Salvation Army this has been a bonus, but for the rest of us the resulting increase in drug related deaths and criminal wealth has been nothing less than a disaster.

So now more than ever remember to take the 12 steps and just say NO to the Salvation Army!

-Skeleton Army, Sydney, 2001.

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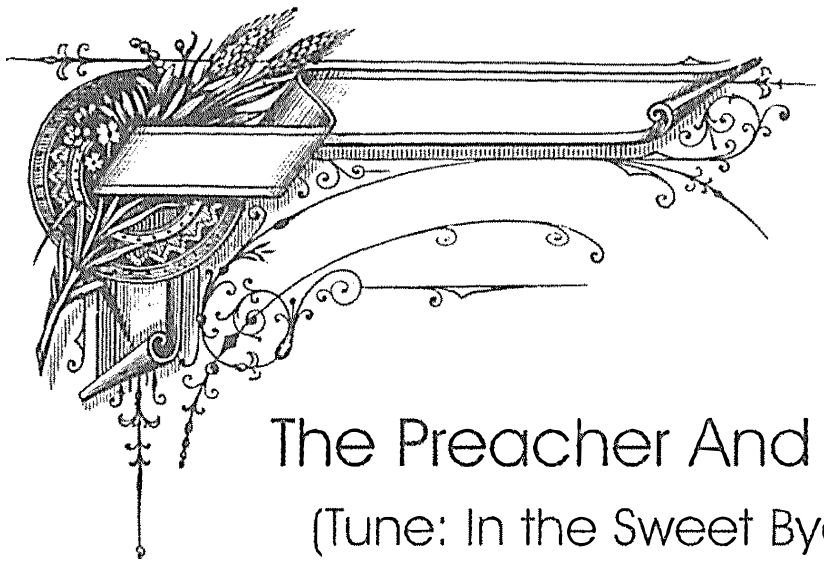

The Preacher And The Slave

(Tune: In the Sweet Bye And Bye)
(By Joe Hill) (1911 edition)

Long-haired preachers come out every night,
Try to tell you what's wrong and what's right;
But when asked how 'bout something to eat
They will answer with voices so sweet:

[Main Chorus] *You will eat, bye and bye,*
In that glorious land above the sky;
Work and pray, live on hay,
You'll get pie in the sky when you die.

And the starvation army they play,
And they sing and they clap and they pray.
Till they get all your coin on the drum,
Then they tell you when you are on the bum: *[Chorus]*

If you fight hard for children and wife —
Try to get something good in this life —
You're a sinner and bad man, they tell,
When you die you will sure go to hell. *[Chorus]*

Workingmen of all countries unite,
Side by side we for freedom will fight;
When the world and its wealth we have gained
To the grafters we'll sing this refrain:

[Main Chorus] *You will eat, bye and bye,*
When you've learned how to cook and to fry;
Chop some wood, 'twill do you good,
And you'll eat in the sweet bye and bye.

Open these pages and discover the truth behind Australia's largest and best known charity. Rather than being the quaint old charity group of the popular imagination this report exposes the Salvation Army as a racist, hierarchical, homophobic, exploitative, right wing cult complicit in attacks on indigenous peoples and the economically disadvantaged. Based on historical accounts, media reports and the Salvation Army's own newspapers and texts, this report will show you the other side of the "Starvation Army".

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